

Message Text

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ACTION IO-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 /056 W

----- 023606

R 261345Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8583

INFO USMISSION USUN

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BLANTYRE 0284

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORC, PFOR, MI

SUBJ: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS INFORMATION ON MALAWI

REF: STATE 37591

1. BY WAY OF PREFACE TO RESPONSE PARA 7 REFTEL, THE FOLLOWING GENERAL INFORMATON SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND: MALAWI, WHILE MEMBER OF UN AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, IS PRIMARILY INWARD-LOOKING COUNTRY WITH EXTREMELY LIMITED FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES. FACT OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE IS THAT LIFE PRES BANDA, WHO IS OWN FOREIGN MINISTER, PERSONALLY SETS FOREIGN POLICY AND MAKES VIRTUALLY EVERY DECISION IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION. BANDA IS OLD-FASHIONED STATESMAN WHO IS NOT AFRAID TO BUCK POPULAR TREND FOR WHAT HE CONSIDERS VALID PRINCIPLE. HE IS STAUNCHLY ANTI-COMMUNIST, MAINTAINING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NATIONALIST CHINA, ISRAEL AND SOUTH AFRICA (THE ONLY BLACK AFRICAN TO DO SO) AND IS GENERALLY A VOICE OF MODERATION IN OAU CIRCLES. HOWEVER, MALAWI, WITH VERY LIMITED FOJEIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES, SHOWS ONLY MARGINAL INTEREST IN UN AND ITS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES.

2. FOLLOWING LETTERED SUB-PARAS CORRESPOND TO SUB-PARAS OF PARA 7 REFTEL:

A. MALAWI IS NOT EXPECTED TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVES OR SHOW GREAT INTEREST IN UN AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES DURING
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1976. THOSE ISSUES OF PRIMARY CONCERN TO MALAWI

WHICH ARE BEFORE UN ARE 1) RHODESIA, WHERE MALAWI FAVORS PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT LEADING TO AFRICAN RULE; AND 2) SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE MALAWI DENOUNCES APARTHEID BUT BELIEVES IN "CONTACT AND DIALOGUE" RATHER THAN FORCE TO EFFECT TRANSITION TO MAJORITY RULE. MALAWI TRIES TO STAY CLEAR OF BIG-POWER ISSUES NOT OF DIRECT CONCERN, ALTHOUGH IT HAS IN PAST TAKEN POSITIVE STAND WHEN LIFE PRES BANDA HAS BEEN CONVINCED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ISSUE (KOREA AND ANTI-ZIONIST ISSUES AT 30TH UNGA). MALAWI DELEGATIONS TO UNGA AND UN MEETINGS ARE SMALL AND GENERALLY INACTIVE. MALAWI IS NOT EXPECTED TO LOBBY FOR MEMBERSHIP TO MULTI-LATERAL ORGANIZATIONS OR BODIES.

B. IN GENERAL, LIFE PRES BANDA IS NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO ADVICE OR OUTSIDE PRESSURE IN DECISION MAKING. AS A MAN OF STRONG BELIEFS AND GREAT SELF-ASSURANCE, HE DOES NOT MIND BEING CALLED "AFRICA'S ODD MAN OUT" BECAUSE OF HIS "UNPOPULAR" POSITIONS ON VARIOUS AFRICAN ISSUES. BUT WHILE PRESSURE PER SE IS VIRTUALLY USELESS, BANDA MAY BE RECEPTIVE TO REASON; TO WIT, MALAWI CHANGED FROM ABSTENTION TO SUPPORT FOR FRIENDLY KOREAN RESOLUTION AT 30TH UNGA MAINLY IN RESPONSE TO ARGUMENT THAT IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO EXCLUDE SOUTH KOREA FROM DECISIONS EFFECTING ITS OWN FUTURE. (THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S ABSTENTION WAS BASED ON MALAWI NOT WANTING TO BECOME INVOLVED IN BIG-POWER DISPUTE AND SUSPICION THAT US-PRC TIES AUGERED OTHER US POLICY CHANGES WHICH WOULD LEAVE MALAWI OUT ON LIMB).

C. ALL MALAWI DELEGATIONS ARE INSTRUCTED AND, GIVEN TIGHT MALAWI SYSTEM OF TOTAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO LIFE PRESIDENT BANDA, IT MOST UNLIKELY INSTRUCTIONS WOULD BE DEVIATED FROM WITHOUT EXPLICIT AUTHORITY. WHILE PERSONAL PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS IS GENERALLY PONDEROUS, EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT ONCE DECISION IS MADE INSTRUCTIONS GET OUT IN TIMELY FASHION. HOWEVER, THE STRINGENCY OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM TENDS TO INHIBIT FRANK REPORTING FROM FIELD, PARTICULARLY SHOULD SUCH REPORTING SUGGEST A MISCALCULATION ON THE PART OF THE LIFE PRESIDENT.

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D. NO, ABSOLUTELY NONE. ALL MALAWIAN DELEGATES LIKE ALL OTHER CIVIL SERVANTS, ARE TOTALLY CONTROLLED BY AND TOTALLY ACCOUNTABLE TO LIFE PRES BANDA.

E. MALAWI IS STANUNCHLY ANTICOMMUNIST, MODERATE RE SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS, SUPPORTATIVE OF ISRAEL AND NOT AFRAID TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED IN AN HOSTILE ARENA. THUS,

MALAWI INTERESTS OFTEN COINCIDE WITH OURS AND LIFE PRESIDENT BANDA IS RECEPTIVE TO US INASMUCH AS HE IS CONVINCED CAUSE IS RIGHT AND COMPATIBLE WITH MALAWI'S INTERESTS. BUT LACKING THIS, IT IS MOST IMPROBABLE MALAWI WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO US PRESENTATIONS NO MATTER WHAT PRICE WE PUT ON THEM. BANDA IS TOUCHY ON ISSUE OF HIS PEROGATIVES AS CHIEF OF SOVEREIGN STATE (BOLSTERED BY HIS COMPLETE DOMINANCE OF DOMESTIC SCENE) AND ANY ATTEMPT AT PRESSURE, SUCH AS WITHDRAWAL OF AID, MOST LIKELY TO BE NONPRODUCTIVE AS WELL AS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. WHILE MALAWI HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO US ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS (30TH UNGA GOOD EXAMPLE), IT DOUBTFUL LIFE PRESIDENT BANDA WOULD SEE BENEFITS OF ANY INTERACTION OF MULTI-LATERAL AND BILATERAL RELATIONS; MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS ARE SIMPLY NOT IMPORTANT TO MALAWI AND WHERE ISSUE I/

CLEARLY EXTRANEIOUS TO MALAWI AND NOT ONE OF PRINCIPLE FOR BANDA, MALAWI MOST LIKELY NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED. IN SHORT, MALAWI WOULD NOT BE DISPOSED TO ACCEPT MIXING OF MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL RELATIONS BUT CAN BE EXPECTED TO COOPERATE ON AD HOC BASIS WHERE THERE IS MUTUALITY OF INTEREST. MALAWI HAS NO RECORD OF SOLICITING US SUPPORT IN MULTILATERAL FIELD, ONCE AGAIN DUE TO EXTREMELY LIMITED INTEREST IN MULTI-LATERAL DIPLOMACY AND PRESIDENT'S PERSONALIZED STYLE OF DECISION MAKING.
STEVENSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION, COUNTRY INFORMATION PROGRAMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BLANTY00284
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760073-0007
From: BLANTYRE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760212/aaaaajkj.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 37591
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 MAY 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <20 SEP 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS INFORMATION ON MALAWI
TAGS: PORG, PFOR, MI, XX
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006